



State of Idaho
DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND WELFARE
Division of Medicaid

PHILIP E. BATT
GOVERNOR
LINDA L. CABALLERO
DIRECTOR
DEEANNE MOORE
ADMINISTRATOR

BUREAU OF FACILITY STANDARDS

Towers Building - 3rd Floor
P.O. Box 83720
Boise, ID 83720-0036
(208) 334-6626
Fax (208) 332-7204

INFORMATIONAL LETTER #98-3

DATE: February 6, 1998

TO: LONG TERM CARE PROVIDERS
LONG TERM CARE CORPORATE REPRESENTATIVES
CONSULTANTS

FROM: JOHN W. HATHAWAY, Chief
Bureau of Facility Standards

SUBJECT: MDS AUTOMATION TRANSMISSION

As published in the Federal Register on December 23, 1997, all nursing facilities who are currently receiving payments from Medicare and Medicaid will be required to implement electronic transfer of MDS data by June 22, 1998.

To prepare your facility to participate in successful electronic transmission you need to be aware of several issues and dates:

- The Bureau of Facility Standards has contracted with Myers and Stauffer, LC to perform the day-to-day operation of the electronic data transmission system including the help desk function.
- A few of the many facilities who have indicated readiness and willingness will be contacted to participate in a Pilot Program for electronic data transmission. The Pilot Program will help the State and the contractor (Myers and Stauffer) identify questions and concerns with the start up and development of training materials.
- A Bureau representative will contact you in the near future to determine your facility's readiness.
- Facilities will be expected to have the necessary equipment and software available for the encoding and transmission of the MDS data before attending a training session.

- We are only a few short months from the implementation date. The readiness survey conducted several months ago indicated that many facilities would need to update or purchase additional equipment and to obtain software for encoding of the MDS assessments before submission. If a facility is purchasing equipment, they should consider purchasing state-of-the-art hardware to reduce the need to upgrade equipment and software in the future. Appropriate equipment is necessary to ensure that facilities can transmit MDS data. Minimum and recommended specifications are provided below. These specifications may be further refined by the software vendor you select for MDS assessment encoding and transmission.

RECOMMEND	MINIMUM
PENTIUM 166	486 DX 66
Windows 95	Window 3.1
32 MB RAM	8 MB RAM
1.6 GB hard drive	500 MB hard drive
24X CD-ROM	4X CD-ROM
3.5 Floppy drive	3.5 Floppy drive
28.8 with V.42 BIS Modem	28.8 modem
101 Key Keyboard	Keyboard
Mouse	Mouse
Super VGA non-interlaced Monitor with 1 Megabyte of VRAM	14" Color Monitor
Netscape Communicator	Netscape Personal Edition 3.0
Laser Printer, i.e., HP III or better	Laser Printer

- Facilities will be required to complete Sections T (therapies) and U (medication) beginning with assessments completed and transmitted electronically and all assessments completed after June 22, 1998.
- Quarterly assessments transmitted electronically will be the expanded quarterly assessment known as the RUGS III quarterly assessment. Beginning on June 22, 1998, the state-approved quarterly assessment is this same expanded quarterly assessment.

- Myers and Stauffer, in cooperation with State of Idaho staff, will be conducting the training sessions in March and April 1998. Additional training information and reservation forms will be forthcoming. The focus of the training is to provide a demonstration and information as it relates to the electronic transmission. The seating for these training sessions will be limited to no more than three (3) representatives per facility.
- We expect that a facility representative will have attended the training session before beginning transmission of data.
- Facilities will be expected to complete a "test transmission;" receive validation and error reports; trouble shoot problems; and, resubmit as needed within ten days of the training.
- By *April 24, 1998*, all facilities will be expected to have completed successful transmission at *least one time*.
- All facilities will have completed three (3) successful transmission before June 12, 1998.
- The Help Desk will be operational on March 27, 1999. The Help Desk will be available to providers between 9:00 a.m. and 5:00 p.m., MST, Monday-Friday. During the "test transmission" period, facilities will be expected to transmit only during Help Desk hours.
- On June 22, 1998, facilities will be required to transmit the MDS assessments as they complete and lock them according to the facility's current schedule.

We recognize that facilities will encounter many challenges in this new process. We believe, with your cooperation, that the process can be completed with few unexpected problems. If you have questions, please contact Debby Ransom, Loretta Todd, or Eileen Wardle at (208) 334-6626.

JOHN W. HATHAWAY, Chief
Bureau of Facility Standards

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cc: Idaho Health Care Association

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